



NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Brenda Jones
202-226-4673

Rep. John Lewis Reacts to President's Address

The Congress will continue to work with President Bush in a bi-partisan manner to meet the needs of the American people. However, for a nation that is facing a potential economic crisis, I was dismayed that the President offered no new ideas to the American people and no perspective on the span of his Administration.

We applaud the development of and look forward to the passage of the Economic Stimulus package. Though the package is a bi-partisan agreement, the Democratic leaders in the House pushed to ensure that as many people in the middle and lower tax brackets would gain some benefit from the stimulus package. 117 million Americans will receive money to help pay their bills, to put food on the table, to buy shelter, clothing and transportation. Their spending helps stimulate the economy and at the same time relieves some of the strain on American citizens.

Once again, the President is asking the American people to sacrifice without reigning in the expansion of the federal government and the cost of war. He announced tonight that he will again encourage budget cuts of 151 federal programs, cuts to programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, cuts to federal provisions that help children, help the sick, the elderly, the disabled, and the poor.

Yet he has not mentioned controls on the most bloated areas of the budget. Why should those who are struggling the most sacrifice all they have, while others with more resources enjoy the benefits of tax breaks? In this challenging economic environment, it would be fiscally irresponsible to allow the tax cuts for the rich to become permanent.

During the Republican-led 109th Congress, earmarks soared to their highest levels. At the height of this unchecked and irresponsible spending spree, the President said nothing. In this Congress, Democrats reduced earmarks by nearly half during the last fiscal year and created a transparency never before known in the House appropriations process.

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We have uncloaked the earmarks and enabled citizens to see where their money is going. Some earmarks are excessive and unreasonable, but most support meaningful programs, such as electronic medical records upgrade for Grady Hospital and land acquisition programs for Morehouse School of Medicine in the 5th District. These are the 5th District programs that would be cut if the President has his way. He is asking the Congress to end our earmarking in while his Administration uses the process liberally to meet the needs of special interests. This is not right. This is not fair. This is not just.

The President pledged to come to the table on a number of issues that are important to the American workforce. Perhaps the most important were the Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization and State, Children's Health Insurance Plan. Unfortunately, instead of really working with Congressional leaders to help those most affected by trade and in need of unemployment insurance and health coverage for their children, the President pledged to veto these bills that passed the House with bipartisan support last year.

When the President is willing to support congressional efforts to provide domestic solutions for hardworking Americans, only then can we begin to discuss whether the Colombia, Panama, and Korea free trade agreements will actually benefit the average American worker.

I was glad to hear that the President mentioned the need for Americans citizens and businesses to conserve and preserve this little planet we call our home. I was encouraged by his attention to the issues of the environment. I do not believe he has made a clear statement of this kind on the environment in any other state of the union address.

He did discuss bringing about 20,000 troops home, which is good news. I continue to believe that we must do more. We must bring all our troops home as soon as possible and begin the diplomacy that will restore peace and order to the nation of Iraq.

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